

An Account of some of the Natural things, with which the Intelligent and Inquisitive Signor Paulo Boccone, of Sicily, hath lately presented the Royal Society, and enriched their Repository.

Amongst the many curiosities, making up this handsome Present, we shall here particularly take notice of these following :

1. Of the un-common pieces of *Coral* red and white ; of both which some are ramified in solid massy bodies ; others (the rarer sort,) are Corallin incrustations upon truly wooden and brachy sticks, and do terminate in small and tender Corallin buttons or flowers ; in some of which the Presenter affirm'd to have, upon squeezing them, found a *lacteous* Juice. Himself having been present at the Coral-fishing in the Channel of *Messina*, which separates *Calabria* from *Sicily*, relates in a letter of his, written on that subject to Signor *Marchetti*, Professor of the Mathematiques at *Pisa*, that, before the Coral-fishers drew their nets out of the water, he immersed his hand and arm into the Sea to feel, whether the Coral was soft under the water before it was drawn up into the air, and found it altogether hard, except the round end, above-mentioned under the name of button ; which having been bruised with his nails, he found it made up of five or six little cells, full of a white and somewhat mucilaginous liquor, resembling that milky Juice, found in Summer in the long cods of the herb, call'd *Fluvialis pistana foliis denticulatis*, spoken of by *Joh. Bauhinus*. This Corallin juice he calls *Leven*, because having tasted it himself, as well as the Mariners did, they always found it of a sharp and adstringent taste, in such pieces as came recently out of the Sea ; those that are dried losing that part of the taste which is acrimonious, and retaining only that which is adstringent : Which change of taste he affirms to be made in about six hours after the Coral hath been drawn up ; in which time also the said *Leven*, that is inclosed in the pores, is dried, and hath changed its colour. He inclines strongly to the opinion of those who conceive, that the long concoction of the ferment fixes the parts, and produces the red colour, especially being near to the hard coral, and the red vermillion, which surrounds it.

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This Observer, having engaged the ingenious Monsieur *Guisony* to impart to him his thoughts concerning that famous Question, *Whether Coral be a Vegetable*, received for answer, That 'tis so far from being a Plant, that 'tis a meer Mineral, composed of much Salt and a little Earth; and that 'tis form'd into that substance by a precipitation of divers Salts, that ensues upon the encounter of the Earth with those Salts; after the manner of the known Metallique Tree, which in a very little time is form'd and increased by the setting and combination of Mercury and Silver, dissolv'd in *Aqua fortis*, and afterwards cast into common water; the parts of this Mineral and Metal joining themselves to one another. Which thing also happens in some subterraneous Grotto's, where by a continual and long fall of water-drops many sorts of figures, and, amongst them, shapes of little trees are formed. This sentiment he confirms by alledging, that he can shew a Salt of Coral, which, being cast into water, and there dissolved, upon the evaporation of that water by a gentle heat is presently coagulated, and converted into store of small sticks, resembling a little Forrest.

2. A certain stony substance, that is fissile, and hath the scent of *bitumen*, complicated and laid together membran-like, and found in the *Hyblean* mountains of *Sicily*, near *Milelli*, neighbouring upon the town of *Augusta*, and the ancient *Megara*. Being burnt in a Candle, the bituminous smell will soon be perceived; and 'tis affirm'd, that this stony body, being recently sever'd from its mine and bed, is flexible like paper; but being long exposed to the Air and Sun, becomes frangible. And the herbs, that grow on this stone, do insinuate their fibers and roots between the several coats of the same. It may deserve to have its uses examined, there being found whole hillocks cover'd with it.

3. A not ordinary *sanguisuga* or Leech, found sticking fast in the fish called *Xiphias* or Sword-fish, slightly mention'd by *Gesner* in his book *de Aquatilibus*, and *Johnston* in his book *de Piscibus*. Our Presenter gives it the name of *Hirudo* or *Acus caudâ utrinque pennatâ*, because of its working it self into the flesh, and sucking the blood of the said Fish. He describes it to be of about four inches long; the belly of it white, cartilagi-

nous and transparent ; without eyes or head (that he could observe,) but in stead of a head, it hath a hollow snout encompassed with a very hard membrane, differing in colour and substance from the belly ; which snout it thrusts whole into the body of the fish, (as strongly as an auger is wound into a piece of wood,) and fills it full of blood unto the very orifice. It hath a tail shaped like a feather, serving for its motion, and, under it, two filaments or slender fibres, longer than the whole Insect, whereby, it seems, it clings about stones or herbs, and sticks the closer in the body of the Sword-fish ; of which it attacks those parts only, where the fins of the fish cannot touch or trouble it ; the Observer affirming, that he hath often found it sticking in the back and in the belly, and sometimes close to the head, sometimes close to the tail of that fish, but always far enough from the fins. Within its belly he noted some vessels, like small guts, reaching from one end of it to the other, which by the pressure of his nail he made reach to the orifice of the snout, whence they retired back of themselves to their natural situation ; they seeming to be the instruments for sucking the blood, because the snout is in it self an empty part, destitute of fibres and valves to draw and suck with ; whereas these vessels have a motion resembling that of a pump, in which the snout of this animal serves for a sucker, drawing the blood from one end to the other : And the belly of this Insect being framed ring-wise, the structure serves to thrust the said inner vessels unto the orifice of the trunk, and to draw them back again. This creature as it torments the Swordfish, so it is, by our Observers relation, vexed it self by another Insect, which he calls a *Lomse*, of an ash colour, fastned towards the tail of this Leech as firmly, as a sea-snail is to a rock. 'Tis of the bigness of a pea, and hath an opening, whence come out many small winding and hairy threds. It hath not been observed, (as far as our Author could learn,) to trouble, or to be upon, any other animal than this Leech.

4. A parcel of *Sal Armoniac*, brought away from *Sicily*, where it had been gather'd in the late fiery Eruption of Mount *Ætna*, having been there found copiously, some days after that the fire was extinguish'd, upon the surface of that
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ferruginous matter which was left of the burnt minerals. This Salt, *he saith*, was some of it as yellow as saffron, some like citron-colour, some white, and some greenish ; which colors though they may seem to come from the several sorts of Mines of Iron, Brals, &c. whence the Salt issues; yet considering the Experiment made with it by Signor *Borelli* in his History of the late Burning of *Ætna* (of which an Account was given in *Numb. 75.* of these Tracts,) it was a Factitious Salt, such as is sold in shops, being a concrete of Niter, Sulphur and Vitriol burnt and sublimed. For, it seems, when he found so great a plenty of this Salt, and had heard, that the force of Gun-powder was highly increased by the mixture of *Sal Armoniac*, and thence conceived, that this Salt might have much contributed to the conflagration of this Mountain, and to the fusion of the fabulous, and the fluxing of the vitreous matter ; he, for a tryal, added some of this *Sal Armoniac* to pulverised sulphur and niter ; but found, to his amazement, that it was so far from being kindled by fire, that it manifestly hindered the accension of the Brimstone and Salt-peter, which were even extinguish't by it as if water had been powr'd on them : And the same happen'd, upon the addition of powder'd coals, wont to be mix'd in common gun-powder. Which Experiment, *he adds*, made him suspect, that this *Sal Armoniac*, found about *Ætna*, had not been existent in those caverns from the beginning, but that 'tis factitious, as was hinted above.

For the other particulars of this Present, consisting of many *Figur'd Stones*, *Shells*, *Glossopetras*, *Fishes*, *Plants*, *Mineral Bezoards* of Sicily, &c ; we shall not here enlarge upon them, as being already described in many Authors.